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[South Vietnam: Communist forces continue to maintain pressure on allied positions in northern III Corps, although the tempo of enemy activity has generally slackened.

The Communists staged 15 separate mortar attacks in Tay Ninh, Binh Long, and Binh Duong provinces and launched another ground attack against the Loc Ninh Special Forces camp on 19 August. Numerous light ground engagements also took place throughout III Corps.

Military activity throughout the rest of the country has generally remained at the low level of recent weeks. There is no indication that any of the enemy main force units located in northwestern III Corps have begun to deploy toward Saigon.

Although Communist casualties in the 18-19 August attacks were heavy, most of the enemy's forces throughout northern III Corps probably retain the capability to launch continued major attacks in the coming days. Most of these forces have had ample time to refit and assimilate reinforcements since the last round of large-scale assaults in May.

The enemy objective in focusing his offensive action in northern III Corps and the highland area during the past two days is not yet wholly clear. His strategy to some extent, however, is parallel to that followed in the months preceding Tet when Communist forces sought by attack and maneuver to draw in allied reinforcements and, hopefully, to weaken allied defenses in other sectors of the country.

Communist units, moreover, are probably in a stronger position in northern III Corps and the highlands, relative to allied troop strength, than in many other sectors of the country. The enemy thus may estimate that his chances of inflicting a major defeat on the allies in the opening stages of a more general, countrywide offensive are better in these sectors than elsewhere. (Map)]

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Communist China: Recent statements that student Red Guards have ceased to play a leading role suggest that the army is being given new authority to impose order on fighting factionalists.

Editorials in the major Peking newspapers, backed by a statement attributed to Mao Tse-tung, declare that the "vanguard" role played by Red Guards is ended, and they must now subordinate themselves to the working class. The editorials go out of their way to deprecate the value of students, saying that the state "does not need intellectuals who look down upon workers and peasants."

For several weeks, "worker-peasant teams" supported by army troops have been trying to impose discipline on students in China's large universities. The new directives will probably encourage these teams.

Previously, turning points such as this in the Cultural Revolution were marked by purges of high-level officials. There is no indication that political casualties have occurred this time, although a report that the army has increased patrolling of the streets of the capital could be a sign of high-level tension. The last time the army was this active in Peking was in the period preceding the purge last March of the acting chief of staff and the Peking garrison commander. [redacted]

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Czechoslovakia-USSR: The upcoming Czechoslovak party congress apparently is viewed in both Prague and Moscow as the next critical test.

The Czechoslovaks are preparing for the congress scheduled to begin on 9 September. It is with an eye to keeping the reformist elements in Prague from totally dominating the congress, thereby excluding significant Soviet-conservative influence, that the Russians are maintaining military and propaganda pressure on the Dubcek regime.

The Czechoslovaks, meanwhile, are attempting to cope with their foreign and domestic problems. Party leaders will meet again with Czechoslovakia's leading editors on 21 August in a second attempt to persuade them not to engage in polemics with the Soviet press. If Dubcek is unable to get the editors to exercise restraint, he may attempt to impose some type of control over Czechoslovak mass media, a move that will imperil the "freedom of the press" guaranteed in the party's "Action Program."

Dubcek, in addition, may have new problems when the Slovak Communists open their party congress on 26 August. A growing rift between liberals and conservatives appears to have split the Slovak party. There is also evidence of dissatisfaction with the Prague regime's reform program among some elements of the Slovak hierarchy. In addition, the Slovak press has been critical of its own party leaders, including conservative Slovak party boss Bilak.

Almost 950 candidates--the majority of whom are unknown in national politics--have been proposed by the lower party bodies for membership in the party central committee. This unprecedented range of choice, however, will be reduced by an election committee to 150 candidates for the 110 positions.

Top-ranking Soviet military officials, including Defense Minister Grechko and Warsaw Pact Commander Yakubovsky, were visiting Soviet and Polish troops in southwest Poland on 16 August.

Prague radio announced yesterday that exercises of Czechoslovak divisions will be held in mountain terrain in western Czechoslovakia on 21 and 22 August under the direction of the commander of the western forces of the Czechoslovak Army. The exercises will be attended by Czechoslovak defense and security officials, and military observers from other Communist countries. Division-level exercises at this time of the year are not unusual, but this one may have special significance as an effort to demonstrate the Czechoslovak Army's capability to defend the country's western border without having Soviet or other Warsaw Pact forces stationed in Czechoslovakia. [redacted]

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Rumania-Czechoslovakia: The treaty of friendship, cooperation, and mutual assistance between Rumania and Czechoslovakia was renewed during the state visit to Prague on 15-17 August of Rumanian party and state chief Ceausescu.

Renewal of the treaty--the first Rumania has renewed with a Warsaw Pact state--highlights both Bucharest's strong public support of the Dubcek regime and the increasing similarity of interests between the two countries. The treaty emphasizes equality and sovereignty, which the two sides assert should be one of the bases for "principled" relations. It also pledges "collaboration" in all fields, calls for consultation "on all important problems related to their interests," and provides binding commitments in the event either is the victim of armed attack.

The accord parallels other recently renewed treaties between Warsaw Pact members by referring to the 1955 Warsaw Treaty and pledging mutual aid against "imperialist, militarist, and revanchist forces." However, the treaty notably does not mention any threat posed by West Germany, with which Rumania has diplomatic ties.

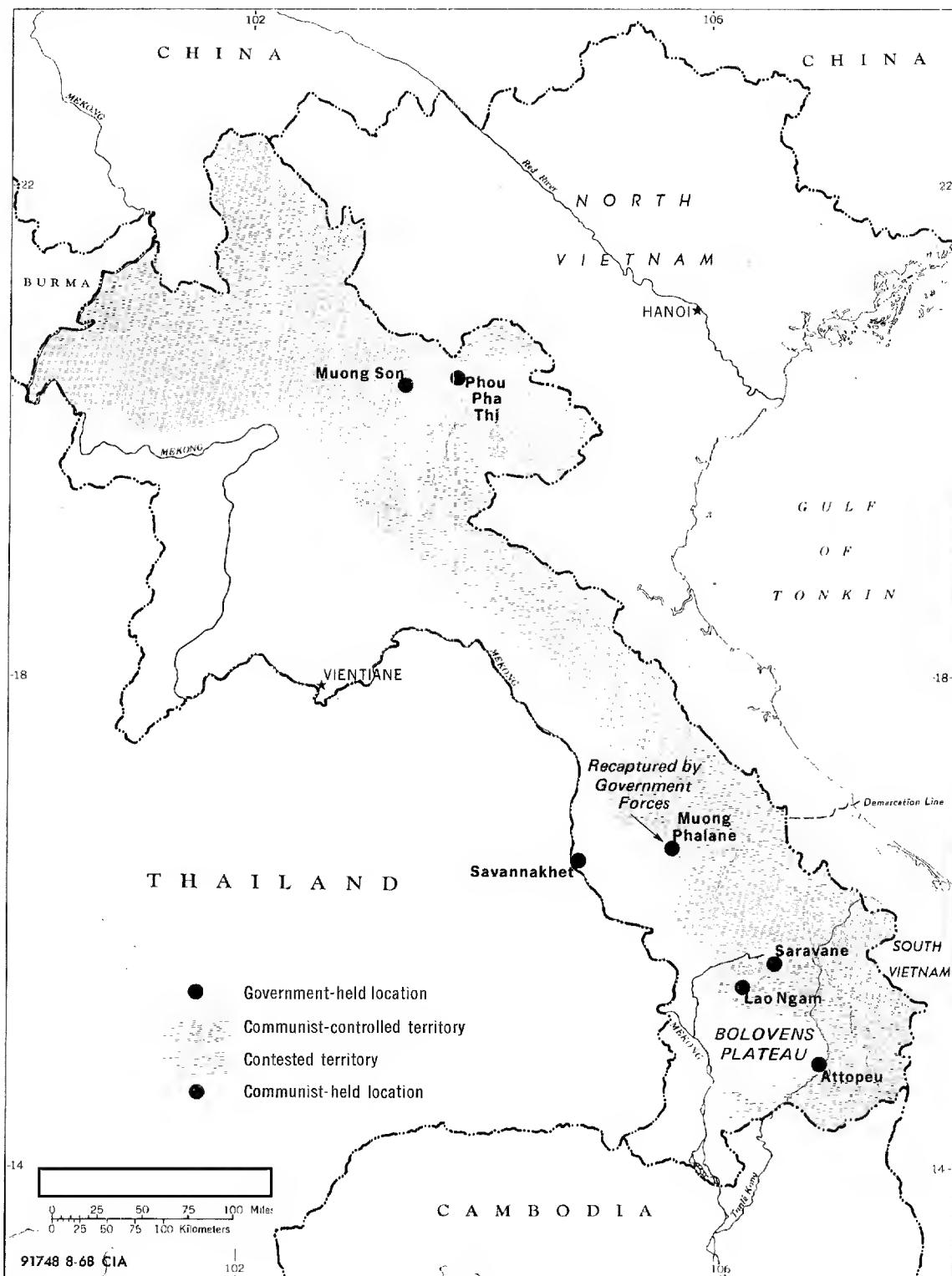
Ceausescu's visit to Prague one week after that of Yugoslav President Tito has revived talk of a restoration of the old Little Entente between Rumania, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia. Like Tito, Ceausescu ruled out any such formal arrangement in the foreseeable future. In answer to a reporter's question, Ceausescu said that "Rumania is not for three-sided or four-sided meetings and is of the opinion that all socialist countries must work out their common goals together."

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LAOS: Current Situation



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Laos: Government forces have pushed Communist guerrillas out of the Muong Phalane area in the southern panhandle. Preliminary reports indicate that close air support in the operation inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy, while government ground forces captured large quantities of weapons, ammunition, and other equipment. The recapture of Muong Phalane, last seized by the enemy on 4 June, marks the first major military action in Laos in over four months. It is part of a widespread government attempt during the monsoons to regain territory lost during the past dry season. [redacted]
(Map)

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Greece: The junta, somewhat shaken by the recent assassination attempt, is nevertheless determined to go ahead with its scheduled constitutional referendum on 29 September. The regime seems to be coming out of the affair with its internal strength undiminished and its position vis-a-vis Andreas Papandreu probably enhanced. Even if the assassination attempt should prove to be a prelude to an active resistance movement of some magnitude, it is probably too late to stop the planned referendum.
[redacted]

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Portugal: Long-rumored cabinet changes came over the weekend when Premier Salazar appointed seven ministers and four under secretaries. New heads were named to the ministries of interior, finance, army, navy, education, and health, and the present minister of public works was designated provisionally to assume the additional duties of the minister of communications. These changes are the most extensive in some years, but there are no indications that they will bring major changes in policy. The new appointees have not previously been prominent. [redacted]

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Turkey: The simultaneous and not entirely unexpected retirement of the commanders of the Turkish ground, naval, and air forces at their own request was announced officially on 17 August. This move, which could be followed by other retirements, appears to derive from disagreements between the service commanders and general staff chief Cemal Tural on promotions to be announced on 30 August. The replacements are competent officers who are likely to get along well with the strong-willed Tural. Although the changeover will probably be accomplished without incident, a certain amount of restiveness among officers who resent Tural's highhandedness will continue, especially in the air force. [redacted]

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Burundi - Communist China: Burundi may soon re-establish diplomatic relations with Communist China. [redacted]

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[redacted] The Chinese were in Burundi from late 1963 until they were expelled in January 1965. Peking's recent attempts to resume official contact with Burundi reflect an increased Chinese effort in Africa to project an image of normality in foreign relations to offset the costly excesses of "Red Guard diplomacy" during the last year and a half. [redacted]

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